

A REVIEW OF THE WASHINGTON STATE TRAINING and REGISTRY SYSTEM (STARS)

*Report to the Washington State Department of Social & Health Services
Division of Child Care and Early Learning*

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Division of  **Child Care and
Early Learning**



Public Knowledge, Inc.

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Background: Why are we doing this study?

- The Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) is the regulatory body for child care provider licensing. DCCEL's mission is to support high-quality child care for the diverse children and families of Washington State. In 1997 the Washington State Legislature appropriated funds to establish an integrated training approval and registry system for child care providers, child care and school age center directors and other child care workers. DCCEL is the administrator of the resulting State Training and Registry System (STARS).
- Current licensure statutes require all new child care workers complete a twenty hour basic course prior to or within six months of initial employment and complete ten hours of continuing education each year thereafter.
- Research supports that well-trained and skilled child care providers are essential to assure the high quality of child care.
- DCCEL contracts with the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) which is responsible for collecting and entering provider training data for the Registry. DCCEL also contracts with WAEYC to administer STARS Scholarships, Trainer and Training Approval and Provider Services.
- DCCEL hypothesizes that there may be opportunities for significant improvements in data entry, processing and reporting that will save time and effort for providers, trainers and WAEYC staff. DCCEL also wishes to develop enhanced reports and increased use of the data. DCCEL and WAEYC are interested in how STARS can best support longer range needs, such as assuring the quality of child care services.
- Our study included reviews of relevant documentation, interviews with project managers and DCCEL staff, visits to the WAEYC offices to interview staff and to “map” processes, visits, on-site and phone interviews and focus groups with providers, trainers, licensors, resource and referral agency staff and Economic Services Administration information technology staff.

Organization of this report

The following are the larger questions that we seek to answer with this report. Our findings are organized according to these questions:

- Has STARS fulfilled its original purpose and vision?
- What policy goals have been achieved?
- What policy goals are still unattained?
- Is the STARS Registry efficiently run, user friendly and designed for accuracy?

Following the findings we present recommendations. In most cases we have prepared several options for each recommendation. At the conclusion of the recommendation section we present our preferred options for each recommendation.

1. Improve support for training
 - Option 1: Maintain current STARS scholarships with improved processes
 - Option 2: Redirect and target training fund dollars
2. Improve reporting and analyses of training data
 - Option 1: Enhance current STARS capability
 - Option 2: Provide another contractor with STARS data for analysis and reporting
 - Option 3: STARS data analysis and reporting should be conducted by DCCEL
 - Option 4: Transfer STARS to another agency (contractor or DCCEL) and enhance analytic and reporting capabilities there
3. Upgrade or replace the STARS registry
 - Option 1: Upgrade the STARS Registry
 - Option 2: Replace the STARS Registry
4. Renegotiate the WAEYC contract or transfer administration of the STARS registry to DCCEL
 - Option 1: Strengthen the WAEYC STARS performance contract
 - Option 2: Transfer administration of the STARS registry to DCCEL

Findings: Has STARS fulfilled its original purpose and vision?

- STARS appears to have two overarching purposes:
 1. To **support the continuing professional development of child care providers**, supervisors and administrators in order to increase the quality of Washington's child care. To accomplish this, STARS approves training and trainers, posts a calendar of training events, convenes conferences that provide an opportunity for networking, provides financial support and assists providers in documenting their completion of initial and continuing educational requirements.
 2. To **serve as a "System of Record"** that contains reliable data on the CE status of providers and the facilities that employ them. This is important because the activities of licensing staff, sometimes based on STARS data, can result in the restriction or revocation of provider or facility licenses. DCCEL assures quality through its regulatory functions of licensing, promulgation of standards and inspecting child care sites for compliance with licensure requirements.
- DCCEL is the facilitator for both of these functions, essentially encouraging and providing opportunities for providers to meet licensure requirements, but also "carrying a big stick" of licensure.
- The creators of the STARS Registry also had two key players in mind, a Primary Customer and a Project Owner:
 1. In the initial requirements documents/project plan for the STARS Registry¹ the key role of "**Primary Customer**" was stressed. The Primary Customer was defined as "the person and/or entity who ultimately must be 'kept happy' for the system to be considered a success." While several candidates for Primary Customer were identified, such as trainers, OCCP², licensors; consumers, resource and referral agencies, policy makers, and the headquarters"; the recommended Primary Customer was the licensee – primarily Family Home Providers and Child Care Center Directors. Individual child care workers, students, aides, etc. were also listed. However, the system is almost unusable by these groups. The primary user has turned out to be the contractor: WAEYC. ***In our view (to be discussed later) the Primary Customer is DCCEL. The key justification for the STARS Registry must be that it supplies the information that allows DCCEL to carry out its regulatory functions and***

¹ Department of Social and Health Services, Office of Child Care Policy Project Report; Starling Consulting, Inc. January 7, 1998

² Office of Child Care Policy (OCCP), the predecessor to DCCEL.

ensure that child care administrators and workers have the necessary skills to provide high quality child care. DCCEL is the entity “who ultimately must be kept happy”.

2. The plan also discussed the “**Project Owner**” who has the responsibility for maintaining and operating the system once developed. While the report considered contracting out the responsibility for system operation, it recommended DSHS be the project Owner for the following reasons:
 - Since the legislature mandated the project, it will hold DSHS responsible for the system.
 - DSHS should retain control to ensure data integrity and availability.
 - DSHS ownership should reduce additional administrative costs and clarify data ownership.
- However, DSHS ended up contracting out the STARS Registry operation and maintenance. This decision may have been consistent with the identification of the licensee as Primary Customer insofar as WAEYC is a significant advocate for licensees. This relationship is similar to what exists with other professional organizations such as the Bar Association where the advocacy organization also sponsors continuing education and polices its members with regards to CE policies.

Findings: What policy goals have been achieved?

- **While the focus on this study was on the STARS registry, trainer and training approval and STARS scholarships, it was clear that “STARS” represents much more to child care providers and trainers.** STARS, in the broader sense, represents a concerted effort to increase the overall professionalism of child care through training, continuing education, standards, conferences, networking, financial support and leadership. Nearly everyone we talked with believes that STARS has increased the professionalism in the child care field and this, in turn, has improved the quality of child care in the state.
- **STARS has led to greater recognition of the importance of ongoing professional development** within the child care community.
- **Some child care workers are progressing from continuing education to career paths** through higher education.
- **STARS conferences and training events provide a forum for discussion of issues and networking;** STARS also provides a means to advertise available training.

Findings: What policy goals are still unattained?

- **The STARS Registry is not yet the “system of record”** that can be relied on for ensuring compliance with child care continuing education requirements. Some of the issues that hinder the STARS Registry from fulfilling this function include:
 - STARS Registry data is generally seen as incomplete and/or inaccurate.
 - Trainers are expected to submit attendance records with STARS provider ID numbers for all participants. But some trainers do not submit attendance records and/or many participants either do not have provider ID numbers or fail to remember them.
 - Some individual providers attempt to correct registry errors and omissions but report that telephone access to WAEYC is difficult.
 - Individual providers keep their paper records of training attended as insurance against any STARS Registry inaccuracies.
 - Some agencies – e.g., Resource and Referral agencies, consortiums, large training organizations and facilities – maintain their own data bases of training and CE information for management purposes. They enter training attendance into their data bases then send the paperwork to WAEYC to keep the STARS Registry up to date.
 - An employer such as a child care center can not access the STARS Registry to review a prospective employee’s current continuing education status. As a result the prospective employee is likely to bring paper documentation such as CE attendance certificates.
- **The utility of the STARS registry is limited for licensing staff:**
 - Licensors would like to have a STARS record of all individual staff working at a center/facility before they visit. But registry linkages between providers and facilities are often incomplete or inaccurate minimizing the utility of this feature in the STARS registry.
 - As a result, licensors must examine paper records when they arrive on-site to check the CE status of facility staff.
- **There is no monitoring of training quality and effectiveness** once a trainer or training organization is approved.

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- STARS training evaluation forms are no longer collected or processed by WAEYC.
- WAEYC typically must rely upon complaints from attendees to identify training problems or substandard trainers.
- **Access to training is limited in rural areas of State;** ESL training is also limited.
 - This limits DCCEL’s ability to fulfill part of its mission – to support high-quality child care for the diverse children and families of Washington State.
 - While this is not a registry or training approval issue, it illustrates that an overall policy for setting training priorities is not in place.
 - Providers in rural areas of the state indicate that they often have to take the same training course each CE cycle due to a lack of other training opportunities.
 - All providers must complete their annual continuing education requirement by December 31 and this may lead to a last minute search for training, including on-line training.
- **Slow processing may discourage full use of scholarship funds** although they are popular with providers.
 - Providers indicate that it is not worthwhile to seek scholarships (basically vouchers or reimbursements) for lower cost training.
 - The DCCEL training fund of \$450,000 has been under-spent by approximately 22% or \$100,000 during FY 03/04.
 - Training announcements often do not allow ample lead time for voucher applications.
- **STARS has yet to provide information to parents about providers’ continuing education status,** an initial policy objective.
 - Intermediaries, such as Reference & Referral (R&R) agencies, typically are aware of the status of local child care facilities and provide information to parents. They could provide STARS information if it were available to them.
 - On the other hand, parents are reported to be more interested in other information about child care, such as location, access to transportation and fees.

- **STARS has not adequately supported DCCEL's regulatory and quality assurance role.**
 - While there are concerns about the registry, its accuracy and customer service, most “stakeholders” are supportive of the bigger picture around STARS: the efforts that have led to greater professionalism in the field and the opportunities to come together and network. Consistent with the initial requirements document, the STARS Registry has been useful to the licensees as the Primary Customer.
 - DCCEL's needs, however, have not been fully met. STARS Registry data is not accurate or complete enough to support licensor's needs prior to visiting facilities. Licensors must review paper records on-site.
 - The STARS Registry does not produce reports useful for DCCEL's quality assurance needs, for example what training is being provided regionally or statewide or the percentage of providers that are current or behind schedule in their continuing education requirements.
 - The absence of statewide/regional reports on what training was delivered to whom to address what needs limits DCCEL's ability to assure quality.
 - Without a systematic way to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of training, DCCEL has to assume that the training results in increased quality of child care. For example, a licensor may identify a training need on the facility site visit, may then ask a local training agency to provide training to that facility and then note any improvement on the next site visit. That visit can occur up to three years later.

Findings: Is the STARS Registry efficiently run, user friendly and designed for accuracy?

Efficient Operation

- WAEYC employs six staff almost fully devoted to maintaining the STARS Registry. This staff and associated overhead (e.g., rent) cost WAEYC approximately \$400 to \$500 thousand annually. DCCEL contract payments to WAEYC to administer the STARS Registry are in the same range.
- Considering the costs incurred by the State and other organizations to collect and maintain training data, the return on investment is minimal at this point for the various reasons mentioned above.
- Many rules built into the system result in significant inefficiencies. For example, courses are maintained in the system by name of course and the dates it is offered. Attendance certificates submitted by providers with Verification Reports (see below) also list dates but data entry staff spend a lot of time attempting to match up certificates with the correct course record in the STARS Registry. However, since the system could easily assign course credit with a specific CE period based on the date, it is unnecessary to do this matching. Maintaining course information by course title only would simplify data entry for both applying course credit and for maintaining course records.
- Since the system and the business rules are not conducive to efficient data entry, WAEYC staff handle significant data entry that, according to the system design, should be handled by trainers and providers. For example, many providers do not have or know their provider numbers when attending training. This prevents the trainers from entering training attendance and results in the completion of a paper form which is then used by WAEYC staff for performing data entry.
- Many providers attend training at the end of the year to comply with CE requirements resulting in a surge of training data entry around the first of the year. This is abetted by having a single 12-month calendar year CE certification period that applies to everyone.

User Friendliness

- As with many websites these days, the STARS registry works well if the trainer or provider has access to a high-speed internet connection. However, many providers and trainers do not have a high-speed connection and some have no connection at all. This inability to access the STARS Registry forces providers and facility directors to call the WAEYC staff to obtain information or make inquiries.
- The data entry screens in the STARS Registry could use some streamlining. Often, the system requires unnecessary steps to accomplish simple tasks.

Data Accuracy & Integrity

- The system of incentives and business rules seriously hinder the accuracy of the STARS registry. For example, providers and facility operators have the most incentive to keep records up-to-date but have the least ability to actually do this. Providers cannot (and should not) input their own CE records and frequently forget their provider ID numbers making it difficult to browse their record. Facility operators cannot access provider data to inquire about CE compliance status because provider records are considered private.

As the STARS Registry is structured, the key data entry point is when trainers input attendance at one of their courses. Yet trainers often do not have the attendees ID numbers. In addition, trainers have little incentive to input attendance to keep the provider records updated.

- Invariably, many if not most providers update their records by submitting "Verification Reports" on an annual basis. These Verification Reports are attached to the attendance certificates that providers receive upon completion of a training course. This process, although cumbersome, relies on the interest of providers in keeping records up to date and does keep the records of individual providers accurate if not the entire population.
- These same attendance certificates become the de-facto "system of record" as they are kept by providers, submitted to facility directors as proof of CE compliance and used by licensing staff as documentation during monitoring visits. The STARS registry is more of a backup system.

Findings Summary

The benefits to be derived from a single statewide registry have yet to be realized. The table below presents what STARS should be delivering and our assessment of the current status:

REQUIREMENTS	ASSESSMENT
Uniform standards for training quality	Trainers and training agencies are approved by STARS. Approval criteria were set some years ago, have not been revisited and may be somewhat subjective.
Monitoring of training to assure quality and effectiveness	Training is not monitored for quality by those that approve trainers and courses. Evaluation forms are no longer sent to STARS for processing.
Controls and procedures for data accuracy and timeliness	Existing controls and business rules are not adequate to keep the STARS Registry data timely and accurate.
One-stop-shopping for providers to get info on training opportunities.	Training calendars are available through the STARS Registry, but many providers use R&R Network publications or mail solicitations.
Uniform statewide reporting of training delivery	The STARS Registry has yet to produce any reports that would allow DCCEL or others to determine what training has been offered, where it was offered and who attended.
Uniform statewide approach to training needs assessment	No statewide needs assessment has been done. Licensors may work with local R&R agencies on local training needs.

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REQUIREMENTS	ASSESSMENT
Efficient processing of training enrollment, attendance tracking and scholarships	Lack of reporting incentives and convoluted business rules result in inefficient data collection.
Providers can move within state and transfer training record to new employer	Employers/administrators cannot access training records and continuing education records of employees in the STARS Registry. Individuals typically bring paper documentation to new job.
A "System of Record" for ensuring compliance with CE laws	Because of data integrity problems the system of record continues to be paper records with the STARS registry acting as a backup system.
Economies of scale to reduce registry costs	In order to have accessible training information for their own use, numerous agencies have their own data bases that duplicate some of the functions and data tracked by the STARS Registry.

Recommendations and Options

The following pages contain our recommendations for addressing the issues in this report. For each recommendation, we provide several options. Our suggested options are presented at the end. The recommendations are:

1. Improve support for training
 - Option 1: Maintain current STARS scholarships with improved processes
 - Option 2: Redirect and target training fund dollars
2. Improve reporting and analyses of training data
 - Option 1: Enhance current STARS capability
 - Option 2: Provide another contractor with STARS data for analysis and reporting
 - Option 3: STARS data analysis and reporting should be conducted by DCCEL
 - Option 4: Transfer STARS to another agency (contractor or DCCEL) and enhance analytic and reporting capabilities there
3. Upgrade or replace the STARS registry
 - Option 1: Upgrade the STARS Registry
 - Option 2: Replace the STARS Registry
4. Revisit the organizational structure of STARS administration
 - Option 1: Strengthen the WAEYC STARS performance contract
 - Option 2: Transfer administration of the STARS registry to DCCEL

Recommendation 1: Improve support for training

Option 1: Maintain current STARS scholarships with improved processes

Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Simplify process possibly eliminating reimbursements.▪ Combine vouchers with on-line registration; attendees are pre-approved for vouchers; trainers must return attendance sheets to receive payment.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides incentive to trainers to report attendance; vouchers are popular with trainers.▪ Simplifies paper processing.▪ Twenty-four month certification period gives providers ample lead time to select and apply for training.▪ Easier process should prevent under-expenditure of training fund.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides support for current training opportunities but does not address whether training is high quality or good use of training funds.▪ Scholarship dollars alone may not address training needs in rural areas or training needed in other languages.

Recommendation 1: Improve support for training

Option 2: Redirect and target training fund dollars

Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identify high priority training needs through feedback from licensors, guidance from stakeholders and other sources.▪ Target high priority content areas as well as rural areas and alternative language needs.▪ Directly underwrite training to meet priorities, using scholarships as only one of several approaches.▪ Develop, fund and test training evaluation models for these targeted trainings.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Focuses limited resources on high priorities. Addresses rural and other underserved areas.▪ Assures training quality for most important needs.▪ Allows for the development and testing of training models that could be extended to all training.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Could make it more difficult for individuals to afford training in areas other than high priorities.▪ Introduces “central planning” into what had been a “free market” approach to training.

Recommendation 2: Improve reporting and analyses of training data

Option 1: Enhance current STARS capability

<i>Brief Description</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Fund additional development of the STARS Registry to produce reports.▪ Contract with WAEYC for specific reports.▪ Enhance web site to allow users to generate reports.
<i>Pros</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Represents a natural extension of current system.▪ WAEYC knows the data and its limitations.▪ Should be a cost efficient step to enhance current capabilities.
<i>Cons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Likely to require additional expertise at WAEYC and thereby increase ongoing costs.▪ STARS would have to increase user confidence in the completeness and accuracy of data for reports to be considered valid and useful.

Recommendation 2: Improve reporting and analyses of training data

Option 2: Provide another contractor with STARS Registry data for analysis and reporting

<i>Brief Description</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ STARS Registry data “dumped” with another contractor who has experience with data analyses and reporting and web site capabilities.▪ DCCEL contracts for data analyses and reports.▪ STARS Registry data added to current website data.
<i>Pros</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Puts data with those skilled in analyses and reporting.▪ Builds on current strengths of second contractor.
<i>Cons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Adds another step and another contract between data collection and use.▪ Does not address data quality issues.▪ Issues of data ownership could develop.

Recommendation 2: Improve reporting and analyses of training data

Option 3: STARS data analysis and reporting conducted by DCCEL

<i>Brief Description</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ STARS Registry data analyzed by DCCEL.▪ DCCEL produces data for other users.▪ STARS Registry data added to current website data.
<i>Pros</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Puts data with those skilled in analyses and reporting.▪ DCCEL is the prime user of this data for its licensing and quality assurance purposes.
<i>Cons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Does not address data quality issues.▪ Still involves hand-off's between agencies.

Recommendation 2: Improve reporting and analyses of training data

Option 4: Transfer STARS to another agency (contractor or DCCEL) / enhance analytic and reporting capabilities there

Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ STARS Registry data entry and related processes are transferred intact to another agency.▪ Agency works to assure data quality.▪ Agency develops analyses and reports.▪ Refer to Recommendation 3 for additional detail on system improvements.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keeps everything together.▪ May reduce administrative and processing costs.
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Impacts WAEYC financially and reflects negatively on their performance and competence.▪ No evidence that WAEYC is inherently inefficient or causing data inaccuracies; problems are more with the design of the system and the inherent business rules.▪ No guarantee that another agency could do a measurably better job than WAEYC.▪ Resident knowledge is lost in the transfer.

Recommendation 3: Upgrade or replace the STARS Registry system

Option 1: Upgrade the STARS Registry

<p>Brief Description</p>	<p>Policy or procedural changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Switch to 24 month CE certification periods staggered at quarterly intervals to lessen workload. 20 hours of ongoing CE would be required during every 24-month period. Existing providers would be converted to 24 month periods with the start date corresponding to their last CE attendance date; Providers with older CE attendance dates would convert to 24 month periods starting sooner while those with recent CE attendance dates would convert to periods further in the future. New providers would be assigned quarterly CE dates closest to registration date and sent a STARS ID card containing the Provider ID number. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This policy change would facilitate providers applying up to 20 hours of college course credit (i.e., a 2 credit course) to their 24-month CE requirement. – This policy change will require changes to WAC 388-295-1070, sections (1), (2) and (3) to reflect a 24-month certification period. ▪ Expand the concept of the existing Verification Reports submitted by providers so that they are required of all providers 3 months prior to the end of their 24-month CE certification period. The STARS registry would generate Verification Reports containing data on file in the registry including any CE attendance that had been posted. These reports would be sent to providers prior to the expiration of a 24-month CE period. Providers would then confirm or augment information on the Verification Report, attach CE Attendance Certifications and return to the STARS administrative office. STARS staff would then update provider records with the CE attended and any other changes such as address changes or their latest employment status. CE course data entry would be limited to inputting CE course ID #s into the provider record; there would be no need to check dates of training classes. CE hours would be assigned to the 24-month CE period just ending.
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- STARS CE courses would be maintained in the system by course number. Course dates can be added and maintained by trainers within the STARS Registry but STARS staff would not need to search for the course date when applying credit.
- Trainers would issue CE attendance certificates at CE classes containing the course ID #, the date the course was conducted and the name of the attendee. Trainers would have the option of printing these certificates from the STARS Registry (with the attendee name blank).
- Providers successfully completing 20 hours of CE during a 24-month period would be issued a CE compliance letter generated by the STARS Registry in the mail. A copy of this letter should be submitted by the provider to a facility director as a condition of employment. Facility directors are required to have these letters on file for all employees. CE letters must be supplied to visiting licensing staff to check for compliance.
 - This policy change will require changes to WAC 388-295-7050, section (6)(c)(vi) and WAC 388-296-1450, section (6) to be more explicit regarding the record keeping requirement for child care centers. The WAC sections should refer to “documentation demonstrating compliance with basic and biannual STARS requirements.”
- Providers who do not successfully complete 20 hours of CE during the 24-month period are issued a warning letter with instructions on how to complete the CE requirement within the time remaining. Should a provider let this “warning period” lapse they would be issued a notification letter informing them that they no longer meet the STARS requirement with a copy sent to the appropriate licensing examiner and the facility of employment on record in the STARS Registry.
- Providers are associated with facilities in the STARS Registry. This will allow facility directors to monitor the CE attainment of their staff and allow licensing staff to check the CE status of facilities within their region. Licensors can produce reports showing out-of-compliance providers by region or facility.
- Trainers should continue to report attendance using the STARS registry as required if they have provider ID #s available for attendees. The STARS Registry will prevent CE credit from being applied twice for the same course number during the same 24-month period. For example, if a course number is entered twice for the same CE period, once from the trainer and once from a Verification Report submitted by a provider, the second input would be blocked.

	<p>Trainers that are averse to inputting attendance data (i.e., community colleges) only have to issue attendance certificates at the conclusion of the course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retain the existing process for non-STARS CE & educational exemptions. <p>Technical changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Program the STARS Registry so that it automatically produces Verification Report forms at the end of every quarter for the providers whose CE certification periods are ending at the quarter end. The Verification Report form would contain the provider ID #, demographic data and any CE attendance already input. This would eliminate the problem of providers forgetting their provider ID #.▪ Course records in the STARS Registry would be defined for a set number of hours. The hours would then be credited to a provider when the course ID # is applied to the provider record for the appropriate 24-month CE period. STARS should only apply credit for a course once per 24-month CE period. If a provider record already has the course applied (e.g., a trainer inputs attendance) then subsequent attempts to apply credit (e.g., from a provider's Verification Report) will be blocked. If a trainer changes the number of hours for a course then a new course record would be created with a new course ID #.▪ Program the STARS Registry to produce CE course attendance certificates containing the course ID # and the date of attendance. These certificates can be issued by the trainer at the conclusion of the course to attending providers. If online course registration is implemented a certain number of attendance certificates can be printed with the providers name and ID # to facilitate data entry.▪ Program the STARS Registry to produce a 24-month CE compliance letter listing the start and ending date of the certification period, the providers ID # and name. Providers should be able to print or request a duplicate compliance letter if they lose the original.▪ Program the STARS Registry to produce Warning and non-compliance letters for providers who do not complete the CE requirement in time.▪ Program the STARS Registry to provide facility directors with access rights to view certain elements of the provider record such as CE attendance and overall CE status or to unlink providers from their facility as employment status changes. Provider ID #s needed to browse these provider records are printed on the CE compliance letters submitted by providers at time
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	<p>of employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Improve ability for trainers to input dates of CE events in the STARS Registry.▪ Implement ability to register on-line for a STARS course. Perhaps start off with e-mail registration requests to trainers.▪ Improve Boolean lookup functions for finding providers in registry (would reduce need for redundant Access databases.) Provide ability for providers to look up their provider ID #s by providing security information such as mothers maiden name.▪ Modify color scheme and cosmetic attributes of the STARS registry screens to instill sense that the system has been changed significantly and promote adoption by users.▪ See Appendix 2 for process maps that describe the changes proposed in this alternative. <p>Cost Estimate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Time required for design, programming and testing would range from 300 to 600 hours. At a typical labor rate of \$100 to \$125 per hour, the total cost would range from \$30,000 to \$75,000 and would require about 3 to 6 months.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ STARS registry becomes the “System of Record” for CE compliance.▪ Reduction in annual workload at STARS administrator. Workload is also spread evenly throughout the years.▪ Improved business rules for enhancing the inherent incentives and ease of use for the STARS Registry.▪ Mirrors proven CE management systems in place with other professions such as accountants and attorneys.▪ Built in due process provisions for providers who are not meeting STARS requirements.▪ Incorporates useful features of current system such as non-STARS CE and training attendance data entry.▪ On-line data course registration makes it easier for providers to register.▪ Two sources of compliance data for licensors: STARS registry and CE letters on file with

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	<p>facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Providers have incentive and ability to keep records updated.▪ Minimizes need for providers to access database online benefiting those without high-speed internet connections.▪ Improved lookup features in the STARS Registry eliminates need for ancillary Access databases at WAEYC.▪ Streamlined data entry for STARS administrative staff.▪ Provides incentives and tools for facility directors to monitor CE status of their staff.▪ May reduce administrative and processing costs.▪ Should Increase accuracy of data (thereby increasing confidence in analyses and reports based on the data)
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Potentially expensive and disruptive to reprogram the STARS Registry. Estimated cost ranges from \$30,000 to \$75,000.▪ A longer CE compliance period could result in providers losing important paperwork such as CE attendance certificates before they have a chance to send it in for updating provider records.

Recommendation 3: Upgrade or replace the STARS Registry system

Option 2: Replace the STARS Registry

<p>Brief Description</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replace the STARS Registry with one of two potential alternative software products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A new system potentially produced by NACCRRRA. This system will track training and CE for provider staff and will be designed with possible use by state licensing authorities in mind. – The e-childcare system currently in conceptual design stage. This system will contain a module that replicates the licensure elements of the STARS Registry. ▪ Either of these options could actually incorporate either the exact functionality of the STARS Registry or perhaps, in the case of NACCRRRA, STARS itself as NACCRRRA may decide to simply adopt an existing system such as the STARS Registry. ▪ Cost impact for either alternative is unknown at this time.
<p>Pros</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No short-term investment needed by DCCEL other than minor system upgrades and modifications.
<p>Cons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both of the replacement options are only in conceptual design stage at the current time. The e-childcare system has some written design specifications. The NACCRRRA option is only at the discussion stage, nothing is in writing. Either option is at least one year away from adoption by DCCEL and possibly longer ▪ There is no guarantee that a replacement system will be any better than the STARS Registry.

Recommendation 4: Revisit the organizational structure of STARS administration

Option 1: Strengthen the WAEYC STARS performance contract

<p>Brief Description</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Renegotiate the existing contract with WAEYC to reflect the changed processes resulting from other recommendations in this report. ▪ Require WAEYC to dedicate one staff person to fielding provider, licensor, trainer phone calls and returning calls. ▪ Eliminate the current set of contract performance measures that reflect in-office performance, or workload volume, such as the number of phone calls answered, etc. ▪ Replace these contract performance measures with a few measures that better reflect desired outcomes, particularly timeliness, rather than simply workload volumes. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ % of provider records updated within 1 month of end of CE period. ○ % of CE compliance letters mailed within 2 months of new CE period. ○ % of warning letters mailed within 1 month of end of CE period. ○ % of training and trainer approvals that accurately apply approval criteria (a sample of approvals would be reviewed by DCCEL site review staff).
<p>Pros</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leverages experience gained by WAEYC. ▪ Little transition costs ▪ Avoids disruption of moving to another agency
<p>Cons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No guarantee that performance would improve ▪ No guarantee that user's lack of confidence in data would improve

Recommendation 4: Revisit the organizational structure of STARS administration

Option 2: Transfer administration of the STARS registry to DCCEL

Brief Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Terminate or reduce the scope of the WAEYC contract and transfer STARS administration to DCCEL. ▪ Hire five employees to administer STARS. Job candidates should have prior experience in performing data entry tasks, reviewing resumes, answering questions from clients. Ideally the job candidates should have a background in early childhood education or other education area. ▪ One of the five new employees should serve as a lead worker and organize the workflow for the remaining staff as well as perform data entry and analysis tasks. The lead worker should report to the DCCEL Program Manager.
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Puts STARS “in-house” where performance can be monitored ▪ Simplifies preparation for later developments, such as e-childcare
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Puts a policy and QA office in the operations business ▪ Puts a policy and QA office in the customer service/call center business ▪ The salary and benefits for five state employees may exceed current WAEYC personnel costs.

Our Recommendations

While we urge you to consider all the recommended alternatives we believe the following recommendations best serve the interest of DCCEL and child care providers:

Context for our Overall Recommendation

- **Re-emphasize the importance of *STARS in the broad sense* as a mechanism to improve the professionalism of Washington's child care.**
 - We believe that child care administrators and workers strongly support the benefits of STARS in strengthening professionalism in the field. We also sense that DCCEL is being looked to for leadership and clarity about the future role of STARS.
 - DCCEL should reaffirm its commitment to STARS, outline its actions for the next few years based on its review of this report and set some goals.
 - The goals could include increasing training accessibility throughout the state, increasing the percentage of training available in other languages and increasing the overall quality of training.
- **Re-focus the *STARS registry as a reporting system* to support its regulatory and quality assurance responsibilities.**
 - Contrary to the initial requirements document, we believe DCCEL is the primary user of the STARS registry. It's responsibilities for licensing and quality assurance are primary; increasing professionalism in the field is one strategy to achieve those responsibilities.
 - The recommended enhancements to the STARS Registry (see below) will improve its performance and should increase user satisfaction. This, in turn, should improve the accuracy and timeliness of the data. The key user of that data is DCCEL.

- Local agencies are free to continue the development of training data bases for their own management uses.
- **Redirect and target training fund dollars (Recommendation 1, Option 2).**
 - The current scholarships could be viewed as a “free market” approach: consumers are given financial resources or buying power to drive the “demand” for a “supply” of high quality training. We do not believe this approach has been completely successful. The demand for training in rural areas and training in other languages has not encouraged trainers to offer such opportunities. Child care workers in other areas of the state have reported that they often take the same training two or three times due to a lack of other opportunities. It does not appear that there is a mechanism to identify the most critical training needs and respond to them (other than licensors working with local resources). Despite the need, scholarship dollars will not be fully expended this year.
 - We believe scholarship dollars can be spent more effectively through direct support of training that meets high priority needs³. We would encourage DCCEL to develop an annual training plan that identifies these needs through systematic feedback from licensors, guidance from the STARS Stakeholders group and other sources.
 - Funds could be used to directly underwrite training (provided attendance targets are met) especially in rural areas. In some instances funds might be appropriately used to develop training courses where none currently exist. Funds could also support the cost of translating training materials to other languages.
 - Keep trainer and training approval with STARS but re-visit the approval criteria:
 - The criteria for approving training apparently was set several years ago. We suggest that the criteria be re-visited by an appropriate group, for example, the DCCEL Advisory Committee, and any necessary modifications be made.
 - The STARS contractor would apply the criteria to trainers and training and DCCEL could review a sample of approved and rejected applications as part of its contract monitoring site visits to STARS.
 - We also recommend increased attention to the evaluation of training beginning with the following two approaches:

³ Scholarships could still be provided where there are concerns about the cost of training; but they would be one option among several to support training.

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- DCCEL should “map” the locations of training opportunities to assess whether the redirecting of training resources is leading to increased availability of training in rural areas. DCCEL should also track changes in the number of training opportunities offered in alternative languages.
- DCCEL should more intensively evaluate training initiated in high priority training areas identified through feedback from licensors, stakeholders and other sources. The evaluation should assess:
 - Was training delivered that matched the high priority needs?
 - Did participants report that the training met their needs, was delivered effectively and could be applied in their child care setting?
 - (Optional) In follow-up surveys, did participants indicate that they applied the training to their child care setting? (If applicable did licensors find improvements in areas they had previously identified?)
- **STARS data analysis and reporting should be conducted by DCCEL (Recommendation 2, Option 3).**
 - We believe it is critical that STARS begin producing useful reports. STARS should perform an annual or more frequent “data dump” to DCCEL.
 - There are concerns about the quality of STARS Registry data, but we believe the recommended enhancements will encourage full reporting by providers and increase data quality.
 - DCCEL is the owner of the data and should assume responsibility for data analysis and report generation. Additional resources may be needed and we would encourage any savings in the STARS contract be reinvested here.
- **Upgrade the STARS Registry (Recommendation 3, Option 1).**
 - We believe these recommended upgrades will improve the STARS Registry -- both for child care workers and DCCEL -- and the estimated costs are reasonable in light of the benefits to be realized.
 - These upgrades will serve DCCEL over the next 3 to 4 years while e-Child Care is in development. That development also provides the opportunity for DCCEL and the Information Technology Division to re-visit STARS Registry requirements and alternatives.

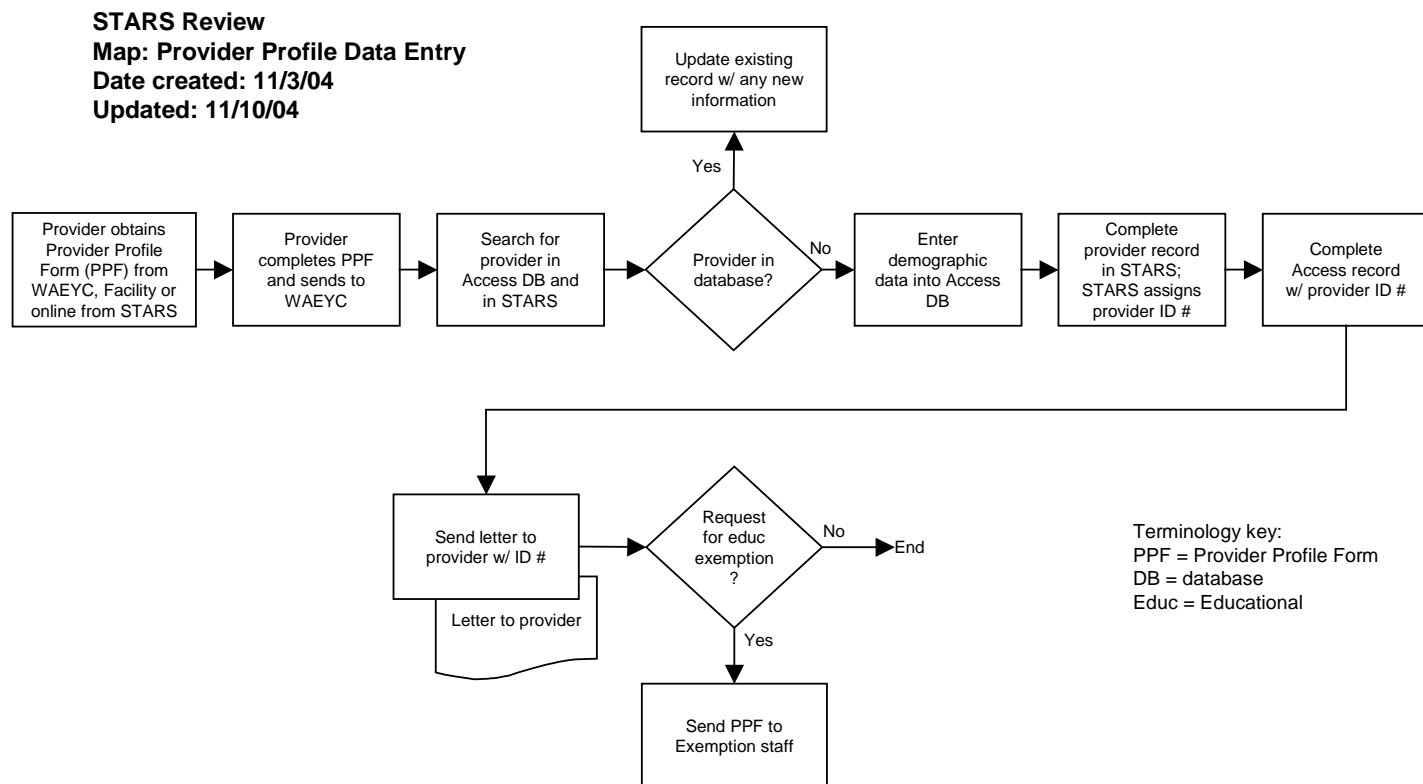
- DCCEL should also monitor the development of training registry software by NACCRRRA as a possible alternative or supplement to the STARS Registry.
- **Strengthen the WAEYC STARS performance contract in light of the revised functions proposed here (Recommendation 4, Option 1).**
 - We would propose a small set of key contract performance measures to replace the current ones.
 - Key performance measures should address:
 - Data accuracy and timeliness of reporting
 - Consistent application of trainer and training approval criteria
 - Timeliness in issuing warning letters.

Appendices

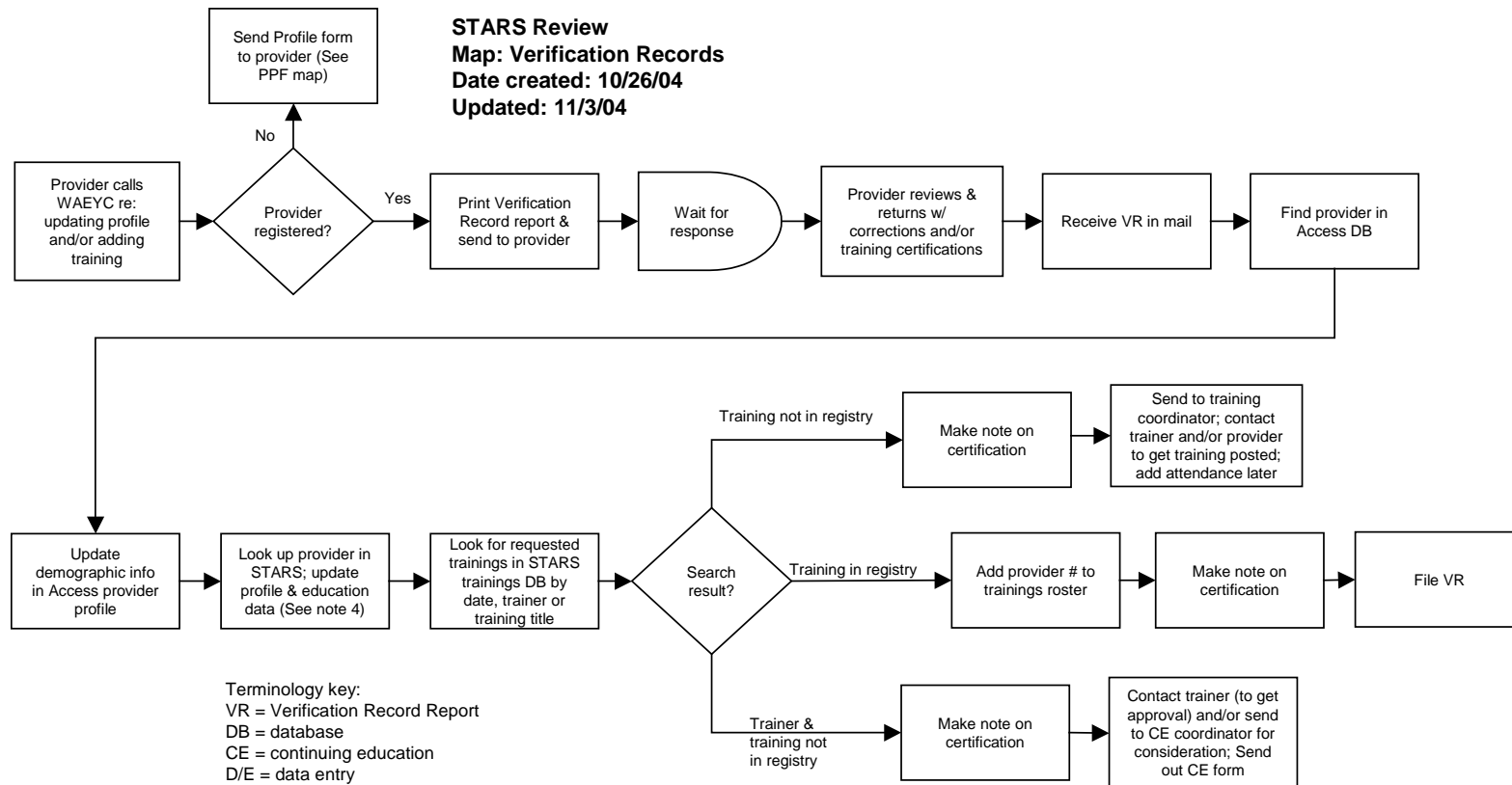
Appendix 1 – Current process maps

Appendix 2 – Proposed process maps

Appendix 1 – Current Process Maps



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WASHINGTON STATE TRAINING and REGISTRY SYSTEM (STARS) REVIEW

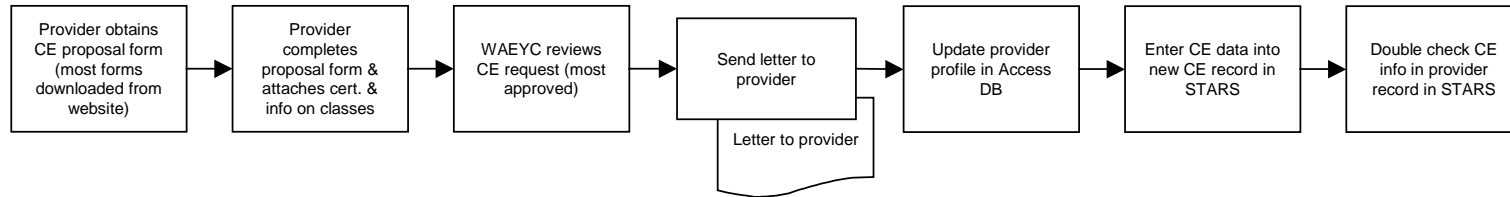
STARS Review

Map: Non-STARS CE Approval & Educational Exemptions

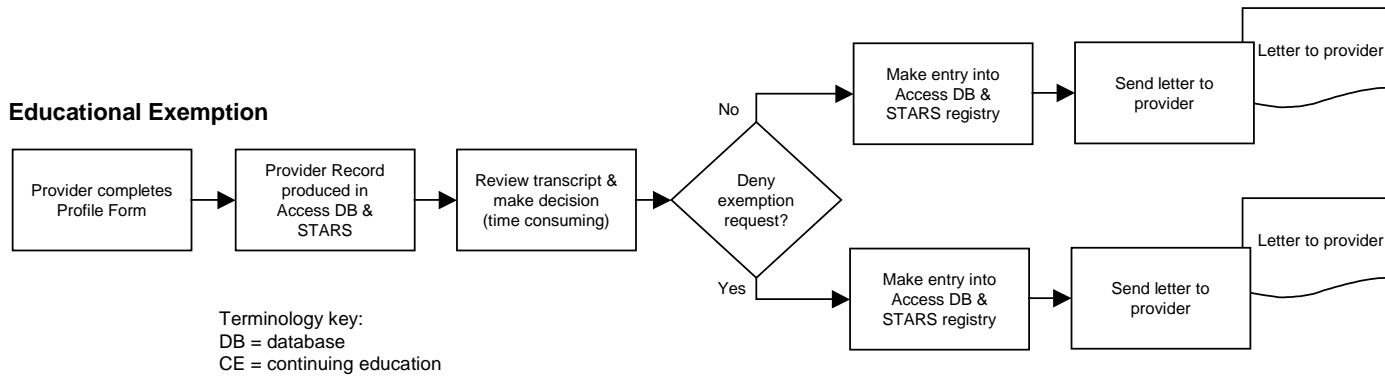
Date created: 10/26/04

Updated: 11/3/04

Non-STARS-Approved CE Proposal

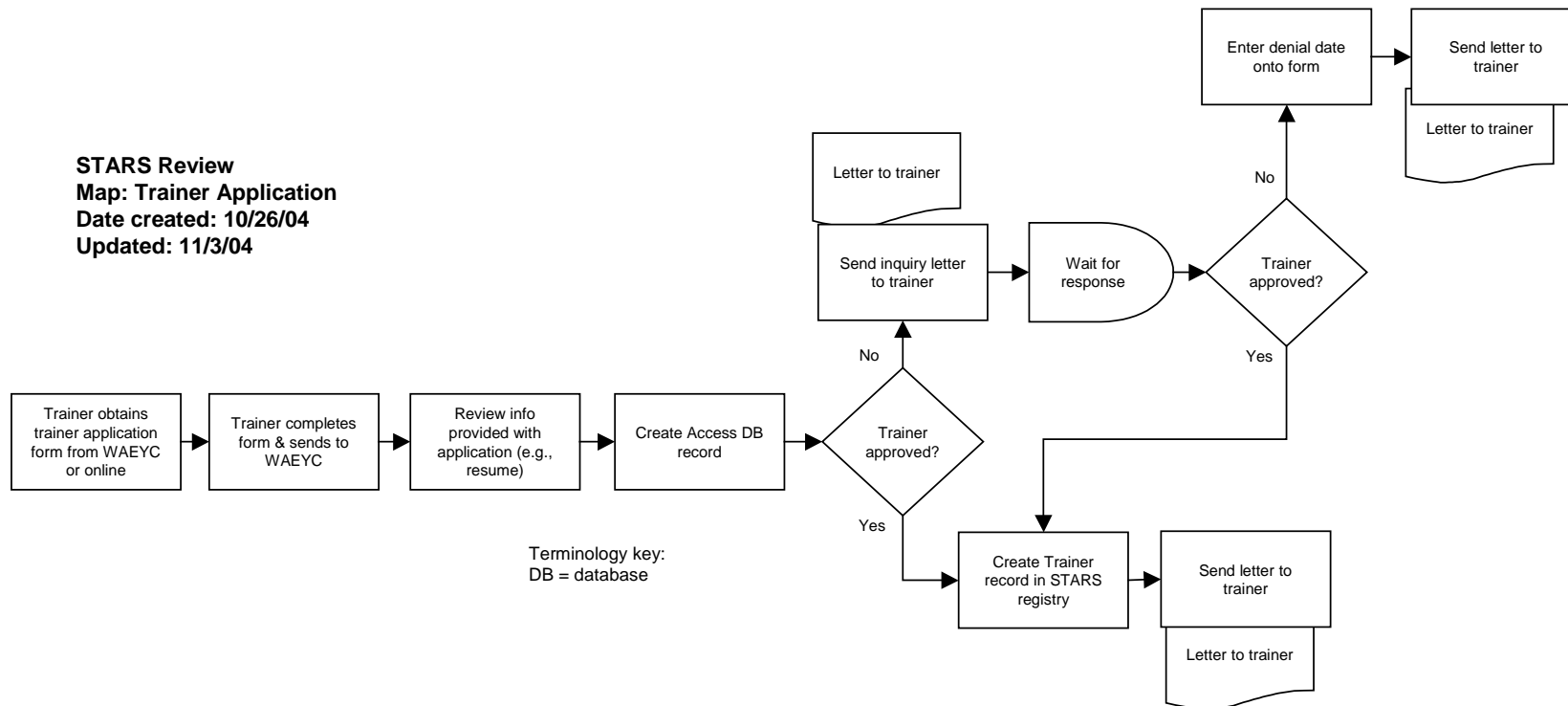


Educational Exemption



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STARS Review
Map: Trainer Application
Date created: 10/26/04
Updated: 11/3/04



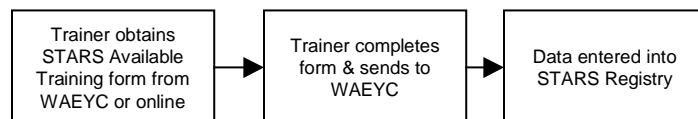
STARS Review

Map: STARS trainings data entry & training attendance

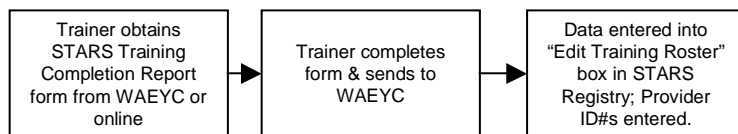
Date created: 10/26/04

Updated: 11/3/04

STARS Trainings data entry



STARS Training attendance data entry



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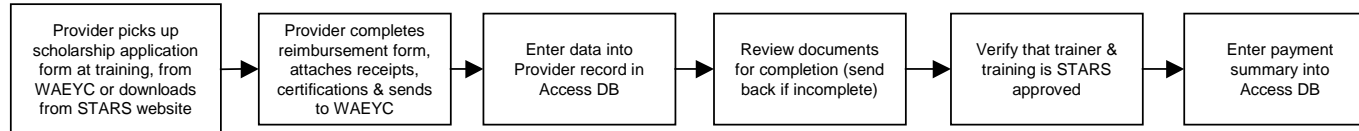
STARS Review

Map: STARS Scholarships

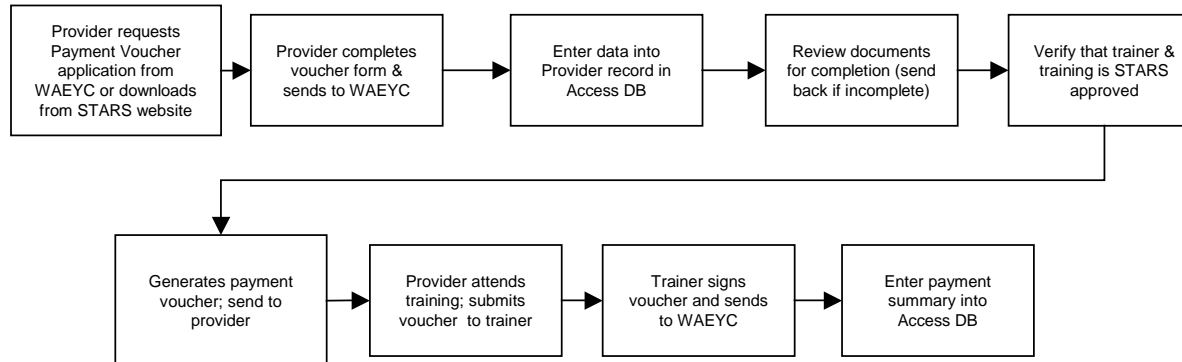
Date created: 10/26/04

Updated: 11/3/04

STARS Scholarships



STARS Vouchers



Appendix 2 – Proposed Process Maps

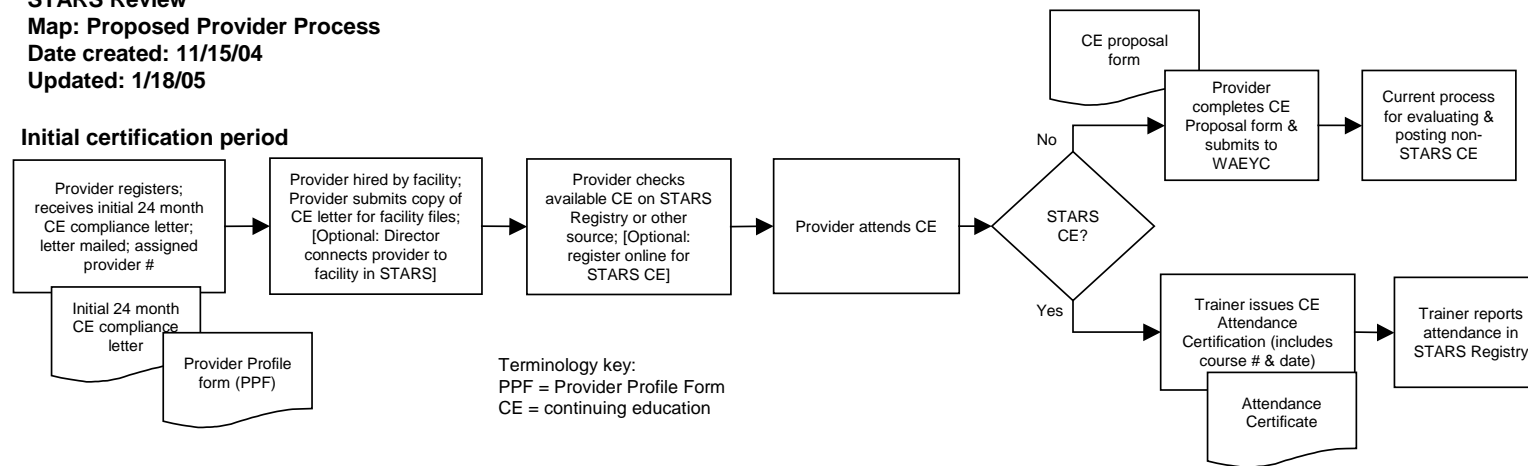
STARS Review

Map: Proposed Provider Process

Date created: 11/15/04

Updated: 1/18/05

Initial certification period



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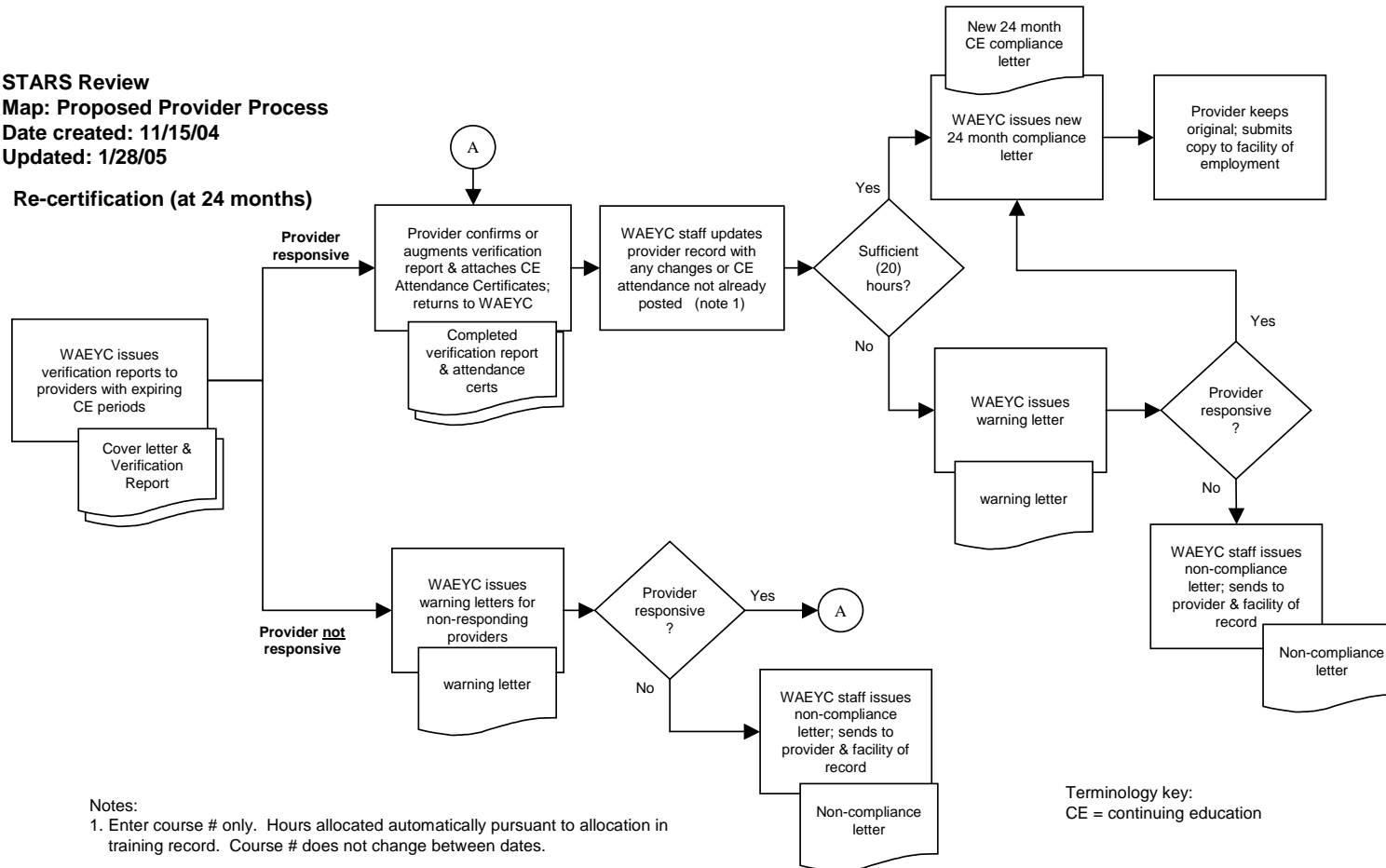
STARS Review

Map: Proposed Provider Process

Date created: 11/15/04

Updated: 1/28/05

Re-certification (at 24 months)



Notes:

1. Enter course # only. Hours allocated automatically pursuant to allocation in training record. Course # does not change between dates.

Terminology key:

CE = continuing education

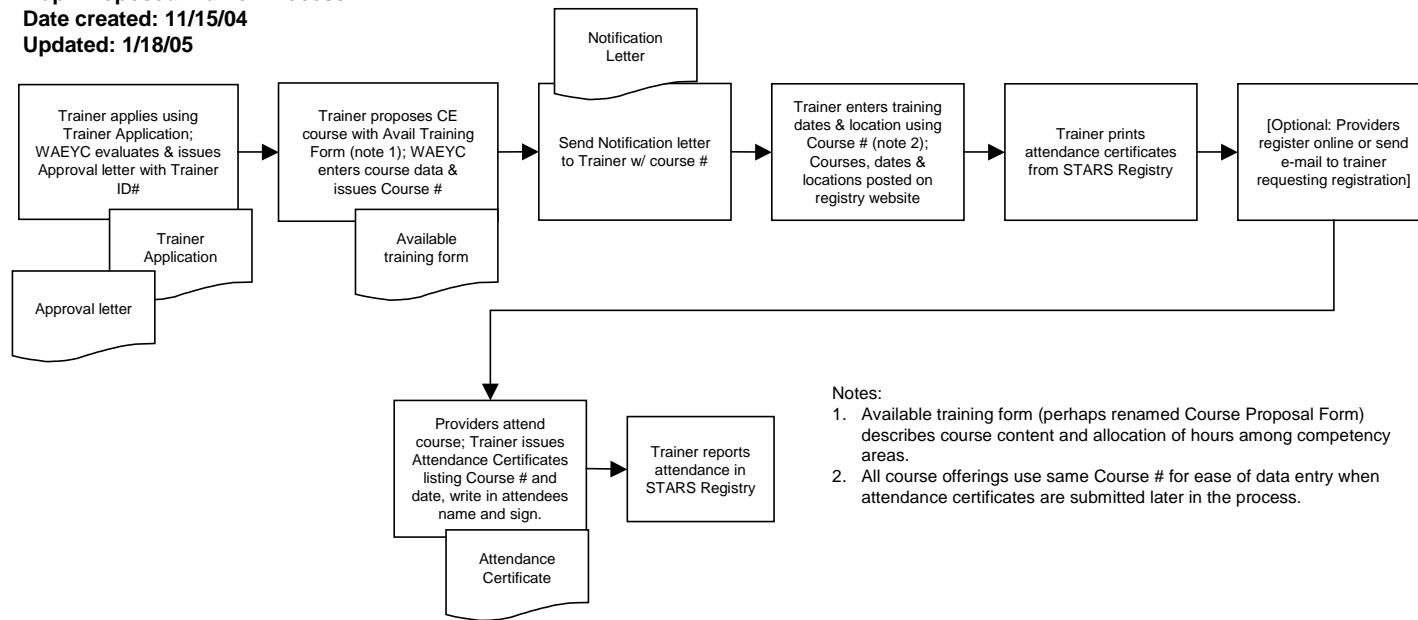
WASHINGTON STATE TRAINING and REGISTRY SYSTEM (STARS) REVIEW

STARS Review

Map: Proposed Trainer Process

Date created: 11/15/04

Updated: 1/18/05

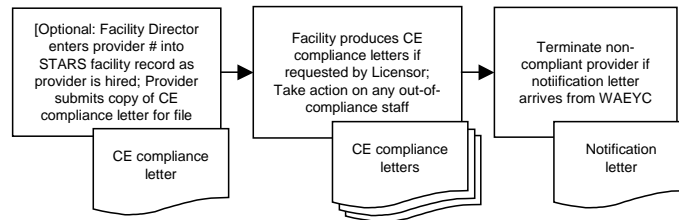


STARS Review

Map: Proposed Facility Process

Date created: 11/15/04

Updated: 1/18/05



STARS Review

Map: Proposed Licensor Process

Date created: 11/15/04

Updated: 1/18/05

